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THE
SUBSTANCE
OF THREE
SERMONS,

FROM
EPHESIANS, 2. 1.

PREACHED
At *COVENTRY;*

AND NOW
Published at the Request of many Friends.

By *JAMES ASTON.*

COVENTRY:
Printed in M,DCC,XCV.



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EPH. Chap. II. Verse 1.

And you hath he quickned, who were dead in trespasses and sins.

THIS Epistle was wrote by that excellent and incomparable Apostle Paul, who was called of God in the zenith of his wickedness, and sanctified by Grace to Preach that Gospel he had before persecuted.

In the eighth and ninth Chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, we have a particular account of the Lord's dealing with him; and also what he says of himself, relative to his Call to the Ministry, Gal. Chapter the first.

Perhaps no man ever experienced more of the power, and salutary influence of the Gospel than he did; great grace rested upon him.

Humbled under a deep sense of his former state, he seems never to have lost sight of the superabounding grace of God, in calling him to the work of the Ministry, Eph. 3. 7, 8. *Whereof I was made a Minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me, by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less then the least of all saints, is this Grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.*

See also, 1 Tim. 1. 12, 13, 14, 15. *And I thank Jesus Christ our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry. Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious. But I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant, with faith, and love, which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.*

This stimulated the heavenly Apostle to triumph in the sovereign mercy, free favour, and unmerited kindness of Jehovah, towards the guilty sons of men.

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In the former Chapter, all (or most) of the sublime Doctrines of the Gospel are treated of by this great Apostle, in a manner that became him; knowing that the sovereign love of God displayed in effectual calling, regeneration, sanctification, and Perseverance, would have the greatest influence upon them, in the discharge of every relative, social, and religious duty, which he afterwards inculcates in this Epistle.

In the words of my text, he puts them in mind of their former state, and contrasts it with their present, *You hath he quickned, who were dead in trespasses and sins.* The phrase *hath he quickned* is not in the original text, but is supplied from v. 5. * — In which glorious declaration, we have three Things:

1. The state of the Ephesians, prior to their reception of the Gospel; *dead in trespasses and sins.*
2. Their state when the Apostle wrote this Epistle to them; *quickned.*
3. The person by whom this great work was performed, expressed by the Pronoun *HE*; *you hath he quickned.*

1. Let us consider the state of the Ephesians, prior to their reception of the Gospel, *dead in trespasses and sins.*

There is no necessity for me to inform you, that they were not naturally, or corporally dead; being in this sense alive, before and after Paul wrote to them; for in his writing, he exhorts them to duty, as the best evidence of the truth of their conversion, regeneration, and sanctification.

But they were dead in a moral and spiritual sense, by original pollution, and actual transgression. This dire contagion had over-spread all the powers of body and mind, and is that impure fountain, from which floweth such impure, and infectious streams, Gal. 5. 19, 20, 21. *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like.*

* Dr. GILL.

Other

Other scriptures might be produced, in proof of this dreadful state. Our Lord saith, *Mat. 15. 19. For out of the heart proceed evil Thoughts, &c.*

So that it is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: then surely the man that trusteth to his own heart, deserveth the appellation, *fool*.

Adam being the head, and representative of all mankind; when he sinned against God, by violating that awful prohibition, *Gen 2. 17. Thou shalt not eat of it, for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.*

All mankind sinned, and become dead with him; (*Rom. 5. from the 12 to the 19 v. proves it to a demonstration*) The Ephesians being a part of mankind, shared in the same fate, *There is none that doeth good no not one.* David breaks forth with a note of admiration, *Psal. 51. 5. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.* God hath made of one blood all nations of men, and the regenerate have so much unmortified corruption in them, that they groan, being burdened.

Inspired Paul saith, I know in me (that is in my flesh), dwellreth no good thing. And under a deep sense of this his iniquity, he cries out, *Rom. 7. 24. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this dead body?*

'Tis the Christian only that is acquainted with the plague of his own heart. So he only can with propriety use the language of the Apostle, *v. 25. I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh, the law of sin.*

This proves to a demonstration, that the highest form of believing in this life, is not above the actings of sin, though the lowest is not under the power of it. Sin shall not have dominion over you, saith the Lord; for ye are not under the law, but under grace. The good man may comfort himself with the Apostle's declaration, *Rom. 8. 1. There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

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Further, it will appear that every unregenerate man is dead in sin, if we consider the following things, or shew the comparison between a man literally dead, and one dead in a moral and spiritual sense.

1. A man literally dead is inactive: so is a carnal unregenerate man in spiritual and divine things. He is never found wrestling with God by prayer, and supplication, which is the breath of the new born soul.

So far from it, that his heart is at enmity with God. 'Tis not subject to his Law, neither indeed can be; because the preparation of the heart in man, is from the Lord. And blessed be his Name, he pours out the spirit of prayer upon his people, and helpeth their infirmities: which is a new covenant blessing, *Zech. 12. 10. Heb. 8. 10.* This maketh them alive to God, and spiritual things; by which they are distinguished from those dead in sin, and who are left inexcusable; having no desire to come to Christ, the way, the truth, and the life, *John 5. 40. 14. 6.*

2. A dead person is without any desires: so are the unregenerate without any spiritual desires. The word of truth says, they desire not the knowledge of his ways, nor see any form or comeliness in Christ. May we not interrogate with the Poet;—

Is Jesus dead? or has he lost his charms?

So few affect the pleasure of his arms.

No, no, he shines, like heaven beyond compare,
Mortals are blind, if Jesus be not fair.

Where do we see men destitute of the grace of God, promoting the religion of Jesus, with heart, lip, and life, speaking in behalf of his inimitable precepts, glorious doctrines, and unparalled promises; by which promises we are made partakers of the divine nature. (*viz.* through grace, we imitate all the imitable perfections of the living God and are thereby made meet for glory).

So far from it, that they will not have the man Christ Jesus to reign over them, being disobedient to every good word and work; and as they have no knowledge

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of God, so they have no fear of God before their eyes.

3. A dead man hath no taste. - Neither hath an unconverted person any spiritual taste or relish for divine things, except they answer his temporal interest, whereby self love becomes the spring of action. Our Lord answered them and said, verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek me not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled. How stinging the repetition of the asseveration *verily, verily*. But 'tis far different with the good man; he can say with the Psalmist, thy word is sweet to my taste, yea sweeter than honey, and the honey comb. Peter saith, if so be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. David saith, as the heart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee O! God. The love of Christ they find to be of a constraining nature. Reward hath an attractive, punishment an impulsive, but love a compulsive faculty.

He smiles, they burn with fond desire,

And languish in the pleasing smart;

Jesus has set their souls on fire,

Jesus has seiz'd on every heart.

The good man admires his wisdom, power, faithfulness, and love, justifies all his proceedings, *Mat. 11. 19.* Sits under his shadow with great delight, and finds the fruit of his love sweet to his taste.

4. A carnal man hath no spiritual feeling. He never complains of the wickedness of his own heart, but in general thinks it very good. Never cries out feelingly against pride, passion, unbelief, ingratitude, hardness of his affections, want of resignation to the will of God. Never a word of God hiding his face, barrenness of his mind, and sinfulness of his whole nature. Nothing of communion with him; nor of being introduced into the banqueting-House where his banner over his people is Love. Good men of every denomination, experience these things at times. And reader, if thou art one of Zion's children, no doubt but thy heart burneth within thee while I unfold the secret feelings thereof.

5. A carnal man is deaf to spiritual things. He will not hear the voice of the Gospel charmer, charming never so wisely. If he lifts up his voice like a trumpet, and the pulpit appears a mount Sinai, that would make a Moses fear and quake, he neither feels nor fears.

If the preacher alters his language, and speaks of the beauties of Christ, the fulness, and freeness of salvation, through his precious blood: which one would think is enough to thaw a frozen generation; yet he remains unmoved like a statue. Well may the Apostle say, Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but God giveth the increase.

He that hath ears to hear let him hear. Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound. And our Lord by way of emphasis says, *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them.* But to the wicked he hath stretched out his hand all the day long; called and they have refused. *Isaiah, 53. 1.* complains saying, *Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed.* But whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, the word must be spoken, *Ezek. 2. 5.* God hath said, *Jer. 1. 17.* *Be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them.*

How different the desire of Gods people. *I will hear what God the Lord will speak; speak Lord thy servant heareth.* They hear God, and he hears them, *Song 2. 14.* *Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.* 'Tis far different with sinners, dead in trespasses and sins: marble rocks would sooner rend, than they hear the joyful tidings of salvation and live. And if at any time, conscience, which is the "soul's power of self reflection and censure" is awaked by the law, to do his office, through sin committed; accusing the sinner, and threatening him with punishment, *Rom. 2. 15.* (This is the *Candle of the Lord*, by which he searcheth all the chambers of *imagery*, *(Prov. 20. 27. Ezek. 8. 12.)* and that by authority from the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, "to whom of right he doth belong.") he perhaps is a little alarmed. and begins to cast out his sins by confession, as seamen do their goods in a storm, but
with

with them in again when 'tis over. Peter, speaking of these persons, saith, *But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, the dog is turned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire.*

6. A carnal man is blind to spiritual things; he cannot see his state by nature, his weakness, inability, or insufficiency to perform the will of God. He hath never seen the necessity of a spiritual change, of his need of Christ as a Saviour, nor that he must be miserable if he dies in his sins. He hath no knowledge of the spirituality of the holy law of God. And notwithstanding, Jehovah hath declared, that *The wicked shall be turned into hell: yea, though hand join in hand, yet the wicked shall not go unpunished.* And that the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty Angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus-Christ. Yet he expects to escape by one device or other: but this is impossible. God is not man that he should lie, or alter the thing that is gone out of his mouth. To use the words of Shakespear:—

The Cloud cap'd Towers, the Gorgeous Palaces,
The solemn Temples, the great Globe itself,
Yea, all which it Inherits shall Dissolve,
And, like the baseless fabrick of a Vision,
Leave not a Wreck behind.

Paul speaking relative to the state of God's people, antecedent to their regeneration, says, ye that were sometime darkness, are now light in the Lord.—God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.

If men were not spiritually blind, they would never suffer such a torrent of iniquity to proceed out of their mouth; calling on God for *Damnation* upon themselves, and their fellow creatures. They call evil good, and good evil; put darkness for light, and light for darkness; bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter: and thereby ruin
their

their own constitutions, and endanger body and soul for ever, for the gratification of a sensual lust.

The great Apostle of the Gentiles, on taking a view of man in his fallen state, yet in possession of every natural and acquired ability, that 'tis possible for him to possess in that state, declares, *1 Cor. 2. 14. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness with him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* An unregenerate man having nothing spiritual in him to compare spiritual things with. Natural men cannot know supernatural mysteries; they stand above the reach of reason, unassisted by the holy Spirit, *Job 28. 7.* With a deal of propriety it may be said to every carnal man, what the Woman said to our Lord in another case, *John 4. 11. Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep.*

'Tis my opinion, that a Philosopher may as well exhort his Pupils to view those stars which are purely telescopic, without that dioptric instrument; as a teacher exhort men, dead in trespasses and sins, to view the glories of Christ and his salvation. *The preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God. Which things we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual, 1 Cor. 1. 18. 2. 13.* Well may our blessed Lord say, Blessed are your eyes for they see; because 'tis he that gives them a spiritual perception of himself, and of the glorious truths of the Gospel; and that to such a degree at times, that they desire to depart, and to be with him, to behold his full glory. Knowing they shall never be fully satisfied till they arise in his likeness, and see him as he is. The Poet anticipating that delightful morn says;—

But oh! can mortal Words define,
The glories of that Day;
My quill shrinks backward from the Line,
And thinks it's Master Clay.

Is a man then that is dead in trespasses and sins, inactive in

in the things of God, and religion; without a desire of a better heart, regardless of God's honor, destitute of any spiritual relish for Christ, and his salvation; deaf to all the invitations, declarations, and exhortations found in the word of God? Nay, to all the menaces of heaven? 'Tis no hard task to know whether such a person is dead or alive to God.

If we have no love to Christ, have never met with sweet refreshment in the house of God, by feeding upon the *bread of life*, desiring communion and fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ; we may take it for granted, that we are dead in sin. Which consists in a separation from God: in an alienation of all the affections from Jehovah the centre of happiness, *Col. 1. 21. And you that were sometime alienated.* The word *alienated*, signifies to draw off the affections; to transfer property from one to another, to estrange: men have voluntarily transferred themselves over to Satan; made a league as it were with death and hell. Our Lord says, no man can serve two masters. And Paul saith, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? *Rom. 6. 16.* And in *v. 19.* he speaks of an yielding to sin, as a mark of a corrupt inclination; and thereby declaring that they will not have Christ Jesus to reign over them, but follow the devices of their own carnal affections; being without God, know nothing of the life of God in the soul, nothing of the principle of life, grace, nor the rule of life, the word. They love death rather than life; and dying in that state must perish.

Lastly. A dead person is not only externally, but internally dead. His pulse cease beating, his ~~tongue~~ ^{heart} fall, never to rise again, till the last great day; when the trumpet shall sound, and reverberate through the vault of heaven and wake the sleeping dead.

A man dead in trespasses and sins, hath nothing strictly and abstractly good in him; his heart is a fountain of iniquity; his tongue an unruly evil. "There are five virtues

virtues of the tongue, mentioned by Philosophers; but twenty-four several sins of the tongue, recounted by Peraldus." All the members of his body and soul are instruments of unrighteousness; the whole head is sick, and the heart is faint.

This being the case, what a lamentable estate hath sin original, and actual, brought mankind into, viz. into a state of condemnation; liable to death, natural, and eternal. How absurd and preposterous is it, for a poor dead sinner to think that he can perform spiritual acts, (in such a state) pleasing to God: yet 'tis not more absurd, and preposterous, than true. How common it is for men to promise amendment of life, at such, and such, a time.

But it may be asked in the words of the Prophet, *When shall it once be.* * Oh! the pride, ignorance, and wickedness of the human heart!

"Never so bold, as when most Blind;

"Run fastest when the Truth's behind."

Whether the inability under which man in his fallen state labours, be natural or moral, I shall not at this time determine; but observe, that 'tis an inability, on which account he is culpable, and from which only God can deliver. The judicious Continuator of Mr. Pool's Annotations on, *Cor* 2. 4. have this note, "All Ministers preaching, make propositions of gospel truth appear no more; that probable, the Spirit only demonstrates them, working in Souls such a persuasion, and confirmation of the truth of them, as the soul can no longer deny, or dispute, or withstand the conviction of them."

A sight of the glory of God, in the face of Christ Jesus, by divine faith, hath three things in it, which distinguish it from all speculative views, a person may have of divine subjects, (viz) a surpassing clearness—an undoubted certainty

* Mr. Walter Marshall in his Gospel mystery of sanctification, page 5, is full to my purpose. "The enquiry of most, when they begin to have a sense of religion, is, *What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?* Mat. 19. 16. Not, *How shall I be enabled to do any thing is that good.*"

tainty—a peculiar sweetness, and overflowing consolation, 2 Cor. 4. 6. *For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.* Heb. 11. 1. *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.* 1 Peter 1. 8. *Whom, having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.*

Our Lord undoubtedly spoke truth, when he said, The tree must be made good before it can bring forth good fruit. And without me ye can do nothing. This ought to humble us before the presence of the Almighty, saying, What is man that thou art mindful of him. I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. And O that God would give us his grace, that we may cry fervently, for the supernatural aid of the spirit of holiness, to work in us, both to will and to do of his own good pleasure.

But shouldest thou vain man, still think to be saved any other way, than by Christ, *the way*. I must be faithful to inform thee. (which information is founded on divine revelation.) that if thou can'st, the plan of salvation must be subverted, the work of the holy spirit superseded, and God found a liar. I offer the following passages of scripture for a proof of my assertion, *Exod 34. 7. And will by no means clear the guilty.* John 3. 3. *Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* Rom. 8. 9. *Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.* Heb. 10. 14. *For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.* Heb. 6. 17, 18. *Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before us.*

But I proceed to the Second thing proposed.

2. Their state when the Apostle wrote this Epistle to them, quickened, alive to God and divine things.

Happy state, glorious possession, surprising change;
raised

raised from a death of sin, to a life of grace: called from a far country to be fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God. No doubt but Paul was happy in pronouncing the pleasing sentence, *you hath he quickened*; and how delightful to the Ephesians, to have such an honorable testimony from the greatest Apostle that ever existed. May you all meet with the same testimony from the spirit of God. But alas! it is to be feared, that many know nothing experimentally of this work of the spirit; and probably some may ridicule the idea as being chimerical. But surely all Gods people in every age could not be deceived in such an important affair. Prophets, Apostles, Ministers, and Christ himself, taught the same. Thousands have lived in the faith of it, and at last sealed the truth of it with their blood.

You hath he quickened. It appears that there was something remarkable in the Ephesians, either in their looks, words, or actions, that gave them a preference above others in the estimation of the eagle-eye'd Apostle; or he would never have delivered this gospel declaration. *And you hath he quickened.* He knew too well what his Master had said, (*The Tree is known by its fruit,*) to miss the mark respecting their visible state. I dare say their words were seasoned with grace, their looks grave, and heavenly; their actions regular, amiable, and sincere, according to the tenor of the gospel; while christian experience flowed from their lips, like a salutary rivulet, refreshing every thing in its way.

This messenger of the blessed Jesus, saw they behaved in an agreeable manner in their new region, *Col. 1. 13. Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.* The Greek word rendered by our Translators, *translated*; Charnock says, "Is a word taken from the transplanting of Colonies: they are in a contrary soil and climate; they have other works, other laws, other privileges, other natures." Though Paul was at this time a prisoner at Rome, *Eph. 3. 1.* Yet he had not lost the impression that the beha-

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viour of these Ephesians had upon him, when at Ephesus. (See *Acts* 19. And the Apostle John speaks well of the Church at Ephesus, upwards of thirty years after, *Rev.* 2. 1—6. and a christian Church continued here six hundred years; but since that time it scarce deserved the name of a Church.) And being so much like himself he loved them. "For according to the similitude or likeness which one person beareth unto another, so is their love to each other. Divine love hath the same kind of virtue in it as divine faith; faith being the subsisting of things to come, and distant in time: and love the union and knitting of things absent, and distant, in place," *1 Cor.* 5. 3. *Heb.* 11. 1.—*You hath he quickned.* To quicken is to give life where there was none before. In the sense of the text, 'tis as if the Apostle had said, you hath he made to live. I live faith Paul, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. A believer liveth, but not in himself, so not to himself.

When Christ who is our life shall appear, our Lord faith, *John* 14. 6. *I am the life.* Every believer hath a life given him in regeneration, he never had before. In *John* 3. 3. 'tis called being *born again.* "Our first birth is of sinful parents, and in their image, *Gen.* 5. 3. Adam begat a son in his own likeness. *1 Cor.* 15. 49. The second birth is of God, and in his image, *2 Cor.* 3. 18. The first is of corruptable, the second of incorruptable seed, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. The first is in sin, the second in holiness, and righteousness, called the new man, the hidden man of the heart."

It appears to me that the life which a good man receives from Christ, never was possessed by any mortal before. "no not by Adam," at least not in its degree; the one I call a moral, the other a spiritual life: 'tis also true, to express myself in the words of the judicious Stephen Chatnoock, B. D. "In regeneration we lose not our substantial form, as Moses' rod, which became a serpent, or the water turned into wine, at the marriage of Canaan; our nature is enobled, not destroyed; enriched, not ruined; "re-

"reformed, not annihilated." The general idea we form of generation is the production of the like; nature being desirous of perpetuity, striving to preserve the species in the multiplication, and succession of individuals. The first man is of the earth earthy, the second man is of the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. The image of Christ shines in the soul, *Christ in you the hope of glory*. If I live ye shall live also, said our blessed Lord; and without me ye can do nothing. "'Tis a new creature, not a mended one," and the reign of it is as extensive as corruption. Darkness once overspread the whole mental hemisphere; but now light in its degree, shineth there from Christ the Sun of righteousness: for he is a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel. Grace assumes the throne, and reigns through righteousness, unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord, *Eph. 5. 8. Luke 2. 32. Rom. 5. 21*. The spirit is said to dwell, and Christ is said to dwell in the heart by faith; not lodge as a stranger for a night, but dwelleth as the inhabitant of the place, his own hand hath raised, *Psal. 132. 13, 14*. For the Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it. *1 Cor. 3. 16*. Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? *2 Cor. 6. 16*. And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Again, we must be either dead or alive to God and divine things this moment; there is no medium between an unregenerate and a regenerate state. Regeneration is instantaneous, Sanctification progressive. Regeneration is the life of Sanctification; the work of God is before the moving of the creature, there is no preparation antecedent to the work of God; for the preparation of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord.

Again,

Again, a man may know whether he is thus quickened and made alive to God, and spiritual things, by the pain and pleasure he feels, the hopes and fears, darkness and light, he experiences, while in this vale of tears, through the remains of corruption. What will ye see in the Shulamite? as it were the company of two armies. Do we know anything of this war carried on in the soul, between the old and new nature? can we rejoice in Christ Jesus, putting no confidence in the flesh? and reject the old man with his deeds. Do we press forward with all the powers of body and mind? through evil and good report, striving to enter in at the strait gate: 'tis a demonstration that we are quickened, and made to live unto God. Let it be observed, wherever there is the inward power, there will be the outward expressions of it, in acts of obedience to him, who hath loved us, and given himself for us. Again if we breath after Father, Son, and Spirit, saying with the Church, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth; and can sincerely say with David, As the heart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. If the dainties and delicacies of the world, the dignities and diadems of the world, the grandeur and glory of the world, the plenty and prosperity of the world, the pomp and popularity of the world, will not satisfy our soul, exclusive of the manifestation of divine favour, through Jesus Christ our Lord; 'tis clear as the Sun in its meridian splendor, that we are quickened.

Further, if we desire, taste, and feed upon Christ the bread of life, and find that within us which cannot be satisfied without a crucified Jesus, without the word of God, ordinances of Christ, and the company of the people of the Lord; 'tis proof sufficient we are alive to God. Again, if we are much concerned upon the consideration of that carnality and rebellion which is still found in our heart, that little love to God and his ways, that little faith, patience, humility, and resignation to his holy will, which we (if born of God) so frequently experience, 'tis an evidence of divine life.

No

No person dead in sin can feel these things, neither can he be alarmed at the departure of that he never enjoyed. And if my dear hearer knows these experimental truths, * I must inform him, that flesh and blood hath not revealed them unto him, but my Father which is in heaven.

Again, if we can meditate upon the love of God, and the affects of that love, *viz.* all the blessings of Salvation, Pardon, Justification, Reconciliation, and eternal life; range the delightful fields of the scriptures, and gather instruction, comfort, and consolation, from the threatenings, expostulations, declarations, invitations, and promises, we are alive to God. He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of these persons? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, &c. O! matchless and unparalleled love.

Let not the poor hungry, weary, and heavy laden sinner, cast himself down, nor hang his harp on the *willows*; but come to Christ and his fulness, and out of it receive grace for grace. He calls thee; fly to his almighty arms, trembling soul; thou hast life within thee; and if weak he will carry thee, if bewildered he will guide thee, if a loiterer he will chide thee, if a backslider he will stripe thee, and restore thee by the way of weeping crosses.

Thou shalt walk after the Lord, (like one that has been an undutiful child after his father,) cry and call aloud to him; but he will roar like a Lion, and thou shalt tremble for fear of the majesty of the Lord.

This is intended for thy good. O thou tossed with tempest, and not comforted; remember 'tis God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, that fainteth not, neither is weary, that hath said, All things shall work together for good to them that love God. If the above things are experimentally known by us, we may conclude

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* I trust I know them, if taken in the aggregate, both to my sorrow, and to my joy, thanks be to sovereign grace.

we are quickened: if this is our case, we need not examine the book of life, to know if our names are written there: to have the image of Jehovah written in our hearts is quite sufficient; yea a more surer ground of comfort, because 'tis more scriptural, and less liable to delusion, than visions and revelations from the world of spirits.

From hence we may infer, that very few know any thing of the quickening influences of the divine spirit, notwithstanding their supposed holiness. A change in morals, is not regeneration; there may be morality where there is no spirituality; but there cannot be spirituality without morality; the one is like a body without a soul, the other like a well tempered body and soul together; for as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

The Kalendar of the Pope only sainteth the dead; but the sacred scriptures the living; *you hath he quickened*. He that is quickened sweetly joins morality and piety together, while he eyes Christ, that is made wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption: for this end we were new created, that we should yield ourselves unto God, and see ourselves compleat in Christ. In every action let God be uppermost, but in religious actions let God be all.

3. The person by whom this great work was performed, expressed by the Pronoun *HE*, *you hath he quickened*, appears to me, to be no less a person than the eternal Spirit, who exists of himself. is from everlasting, and whose existence can never cease. The word, or name Spirit, is given to the Deity, *John 4. 24. God is a Spirit*; but I mean the third person in the Deity, called *the Spirit*, *John 6, 63. also, Gen 1. 'tis said, And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters*. There are three things worthy of our attention in this first Chap. of Genesis.

1. Creation is attributed to the Deity by a name of the plural number. *elohim*, yet joined to a verb singular *bara*, is the root of itself, *he created*, third person singular. *Kal. v. 1.*

2. The Spirit is spoken of distinctly, or by himself: *And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters*, Merachephet, *moved*, hovered, fluttered, caused a tremulous motion; cherished and prepared as it were, the lifeless mass of earth for all its subsequent productions. *v. 2.*

3. A consultation is held respecting the creation of Man, (that master-piece of divine wisdom,) by the divine persons, made known by two plural pronouns, *us*, and *our*. And God said, Let us make man in our image.* Now whether these passages of sacred scripture, do not prove the doctrine of a Trinity of persons, in unity of the divine essence, I shall leave to the candid hearer; only observe, that the best Expositors I have seen, are of this Judgment, viz. Diodati Trapp Assembly, Pool, Henry, Gill, &c.

That the holy Spirit is a distinct person, will appear by considering that a person is an "intelligent agent, that thinks, wills, and acts of itself." Leigh.

1. Distinct personal characters and actions are ascribed to him, as to live in, and of himself, from everlasting. *Heb 9. 14. called the eternal spirit. Job 33. 4. The spirit of God hath made me*, saith Elihu.

There are the pronouns I, thou, he, me; *Seperate to me, for the work I have called them*. All these worketh that and the self same spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. He is said to reprove the world of sin, which carries in it the proper notion of a *Person*. He teacheth, and instructeth the people of God in every thing necessary to Salvation. Christ saith, he shall testify of me; he is called the comforter; is said *to help the infirmities* of his people, and make intercession for them, applies the promises of

* The word is *negnafch*; let us, or we will make, it is fut. Kal. 1 person pl. from the root *gnafah*, he did make, *betzal-menu*, in our image. be in *tzelem*, an image *nu*, at the end, *our*, &c. *v. 26.* Robertson's Hebrew Lex. and Bailey's Hebrew Grammar.

of the gospel to the hearts of convinced sinners, takes off the things of Christ, *viz.* of the blood, righteousness, and grace of Christ; and sheweth to those sensible of their transgressions, acquits them at the bar of their consciences, and delivereth them from the power and guilt of sin, yea from a spirit of bondage, to fear; and under the influences of the same spirit, they can say, abba, Father, my Lord, and my God. He is said to be vexed and grieved. Ananias and Sapphira are said to lie to the holy Ghost.

Baptism is performed in the name of the Spirit; and the article *the* being thrice repeated, denotes distinct personality, in each *Person*. And in my opinion, as long as this ordinance is administered, so long will the doctrine of the distinct personality be established. But every man hath an undoubted right to think for himself. He appeared at the baptism of our Lord in the form of a dove; and on the day of Pentecost, like cloven tongues of fire.

But further it appears, that he is not only a person, but a divine person, *viz.* God.

1. Every property of the divine nature is found in him, or attributed to him, yea, those properties that perfectly, and eternally distinguish him from all creatures, such as, Infinite, Eternal self-existent, Independent, Immutable, Almighty, Omniscient, Omnipresent, Immortal; which stand opposed to every creature, whether human or Angelic.

The other perfections attributed to him, such as Wisdom, Holiness, Justice, Merciful, Faithfulness, Goodness, Truth, shine with some faint rays in rational creatures, especially if the image of God is instamped upon them, by the Spirit in regeneration; which image consisteth in righteousness, knowledge, and holiness; for we are changed into the same image, from glory, to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord. And this is the best evidence of regeneration, to be enabled to imitate all the imitable perfection of the Lord our God, from a clear and satis-

satisfactory view of their intrinsic excellency, while we look to the Lord Jesus Christ, as the alone ground of our acceptance before the awful throne of Jehovah.

Further, the names and titles of Deity, which are given to him, in the word, prove him to be a divine *Person* viz. *Jehovah*, *Num.* 14. 20. *Heb.* 3. 7, 8. Lord, *Isa.* 6. 8, 9. *1 Cor.* 12. 5. *1 Thes.* 3. 12. God, *Acts* 5. 4. *2 Tim.* 3. 16. See also, *1 Cor.* 3. 16. *Acts* 1. 16. with, *Acts* 4. 24. *Num.* 12. 6 with, *2 Pet.* 1. 21. He is called the spirit of glory, *1 Per.* 4. 14.

Also, the creation and preservation of all things created, are attributed to the divine Spirit, *Job.* 26. 13. *By his Spirit he garnished the heavens; thou sendest forth thy spirit, and renewest the face of the earth.* By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. Holy men spake as they were moved by the holy Ghost. All scripture is given by inspiration of God.

Divine honor and worship are given to him, *Rev.* 2. 29. But divine worship belongs to none but God; 'tis his absolute prerogative. 'Tis blasphemy, and consequently dangerous for any creature to accept of it: men and Angels have refused it, as dreading the awful consequences, *Acts* 14. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15. *Rev.* 19. 10. Herod was smitten by an Angel of the Lord, for not giving God the glory; when the people were so stupid as to say, it is the voice of a God, and not of a man, when he delivered his Oration, *Acts* 12. Doxologies, (or ascriptions of glory,) are given to the holy Spirit. *

The Pronoun HE in my text, 'tis evident, refers to this divine person, as the author of this great work, of quickening dead sinners; yea of the whole work of grace upon the hearts of the children of God, in effectual calling, conversion, and sanctification: 'tis not by the power or might of man, but by the eternal Spirit. Sancti-

* The learned Leigh says, that " In the first Constantinopolitan council, assembled against Macedonius, who denied the divinity of the holy Ghost, there were 150 Bishops."

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Sanctification is not a web woven out of our own bowels, the whole frame depends upon God, as the stream depends upon the fountain, the beam upon the sun, or fruit upon the root; and every good man regards the sanctification of (as much as the salvation of) Christ.

The same divine power is exerted in this work that was put for in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, *Rom 1. 4 And declared to be the Son of God with power; according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. 1 Tim. 3. 16. 1 Pet. 3. 18.* 'Tis by the spirit that dwells in the saints, that God will quicken their mortal bodies, and raise them from the dead.

The very nature of regeneration proves God to be the author of it; as man hath no hand in his first birth, neither hath he in his second. 'Tis not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God; we cannot give that we have not: our whole nature is contaminated, and consequently nothing pure can flow from such a corrupt fountain. This made our Lord say, *Except a man be born of water, and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

God neither was, nor is, moved to affect this change, through any works found in men; because antecedent to it, there could be no good works in man: witness, Zaccheus, Paul, Mary Magdalene, the Thief, and a thousand more. 'Tis owing alone to the free grace of God, for its beginning, growth, and perfection. I am found of them that fought me not. He that hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Improvement.

1. It appears from what has been said, That man by nature, and practice, is in a state of condemnation, an enemy to God, and liable to all the curses of a broken law: and if *grace* prevent not, must be miserable for ever. The wages of sin is death.

2. Sinner don't think (as is too often the case,) to
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hide thyself in a state of incognito, or that God will not avenge himself of such an adversary. The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good. Hell is naked before him. There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves, *Prov. 15. 3. Job. 26. 6. and 34. 22.*

God in punishing is slow, but sure: his hand is lifted up, he warns before he wounds. Judgment being his strange work, he desireth not the *death of a sinner*. Yet set not thy heart to do evil, nor provoke the Lord God, lest thou kindle a fire in his anger, that will burn to the lowest *Hell*. He hath bound himself by oath, and promise, that the wicked shall be turned into *Hell*; that he will rain upon them snares, fire-brands, and an horrible tempest, &c. that they shall never enter into his rest. Ah! sinner, if thou despise the riches of his grace, and forbearance, and die an enemy to Jesus Christ, fearfulness shall surprise thee, and with the messengers of his wrath he will inclose thee on every side. Horror and amazement will fill thy spirit, being called to appear at the bar of a jealous God; while righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his *throne*.

It will be in vain to supplicate the rocks and mountains to fall on thee, to hide thee from the presence of him that sitteth upon the *throne*; whose eyes are as a *flame of fire*: in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom, and knowledge. He will look upon thee with indignation; and as the Judge of quick and dead, will pronounce the unalterable sentence, *Go ye cursed into everlasting fire*. Where thou must remain as long as the righteousness and justice of God shall endure.

3. Examine thyself, whether this great work has been wrought upon thy soul, by the great personage in my text. And let it never be forgotten, that nothing but his own work will stand that day of trial, *1 Cor. 3. 13. 14. 15. Every mans work shall be made manifest. For the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every mans work, of what sort it is. If*
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any mans work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any mans work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved; yet so, as by fire. *Joel 2. 11.* And the Lord shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the Lord is great, and very terrible; and who can abide it?

Ask thyself these serious questions; am I a changed person—are old things done away, and all things become new—am I in Christ, and is Christ in me the hope of glory? do I feel a divine life in my soul, which moveth me to all acts of holy obedience? do I find this divine life hunger and thirst after Christ, and his righteousness, the spiritual food found in the Gospel? a manifestation of divine love; and find him my green fir tree, in whom all my fruit is found. Is he more precious to me than rubies? are his commands delightful? and do I find in keeping of them a great reward? do I walk soberly, with respect to myself, righteously towards my neighbour, and godly towards my Maker? *Titus 2. 12.* If thou findest this to be thy case, 'tis evident thou art quickened. The Lord keep thee humble and watchful and help thee to call upon him; “not only with a loud voice, but an elevated soul; not only with a bended knee, but a broken heart; not only with a mere supplicating tone, but a groaning spirit; not only with a ready ear, but a receiving heart.” And remember, that outward services offered at Gerizim, or Jerusalem, will profit thee but little. God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

4. Let us be careful to render all the glory which is due to the author of our spiritual life, light, and comfort: and while we adore the *Father* that hath loved us, and the *Son* that hath redeemed us, let us adore the *Spirit* that hath sanctified us; and trust him with the whole work of grace upon the *soul*: being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in us, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Let us be humbled before Almighty God, on account of our own imperfection. Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall. This being well considered, will have a tendency to keep us low at the foot-stool of his mercy. The fall of others will excite in us pity towards them, caution to ourselves, and thankfulness to God; by whom alone we stand.

Sin should make a man humble, because it is his own; and grace should make him humble because it is not his own. For high as holiness may rise, its foundation is self abasement.

Humility, tis true, is a plain, yet a comely garment; 'tis excellent for a man to be out of love with himself, and see that Christ is all, and in all; for then and then only, are we something in Gods account, when we are nothing in our own. Not he which commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.

Self, seemeth to be the chief end of every unregenerate man: but a regenerate person liveth not unto himself, but unto God. 'Tis this, and this only, that makes a man excellent. To be created anew in Christ Jesus, is the first effect of predestination; and the knowledge of our relationship to Christ as brethren, is founded in this divine change, *Heb. 2. 11. For both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one. For which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.*

'Tis this that enableth the subjects of it. to produce real spiritual life, *John 5. 26. For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.* Which none that are not the subjects of it can produce, *John 3. 6. That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit.* A man destitute of this divine principle, by all the efforts of nature, cannot extricate himself from the power of sin, and corrupt nature. But all things are possible to him that believeth; and the Lord hath promised that sin shall not have dominion over him; he being not under the law, but under grace. If I live, saith Christ to his people, ye shall live also.

also. I am the resurrection and the life. Christ himself must die before the good man can, either spiritually, or eternally, *Heb. 7. 24. 25. Rev. 1. 18.*

Divine faith makes use of these things, for the comfort, consolation, and assurance (at times,) of eternal salvation. I know the golden chain of assurance is wore but by few; 'tis a ring put upon the hand of the diligent, to distinguish him from the *Sluggard*, *Prov. 10. 4. He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich. 2 Peter 1. 10. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.*

Be therefore diligent; and hope unto the end; and know, that he which put it on, can take it off when he pleaseth; and that he will when we displease him, is evident to all experimental Christians.

Lastly. Let every person be careful of speaking any thing by way of ridicule against the holy Spirit; for thus it is written, *Mark 3. 28. 29. Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies where with soever they shall blaspheme; But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost, hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation.*

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, be with you all,
Amen.

THE END.

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